Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 14 Number 2 February 2017

**FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 12th February 2017: ICRISAT, Patancheru, 6.30AM.**

ICRISAT is one of the richest birding spots around the city and a winter visit here is near mandatory. It boasts of a varied habitat with lakes, fields, ponds, grasslands, etc., and this makes for a varied species list. ICRISAT may give us Wire-tailed Swallows, Blue-tailed Bee-eaters and Yellow-wattled Lapwings, besides the water birds, a few raptors and some bush birds as well. This will be a half-day trip. Carry snacks and water as usual. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

**HSBC HYDERABAD BIRD RACE: Sunday, 19th February 2017.**

Details will be intimated via email on the BSAP e-group.

**INDOOR MEETING: LIFE OF BIRDS Episode-2: The Mastery of Flight**
**Thursday, 2nd February 2017, 6.00PM: Hamburg Hall, Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034.** (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

"For all the grace and agility, birds face serious challenges in getting into the air, staying there, and landing safely. Among their many adaptations is the single weight-saving feature that only birds possess – feathers." Commentary by the world-famous Sir David Attenborough brings alive this interesting BBC documentary series, which describes various aspects of the life of birds.

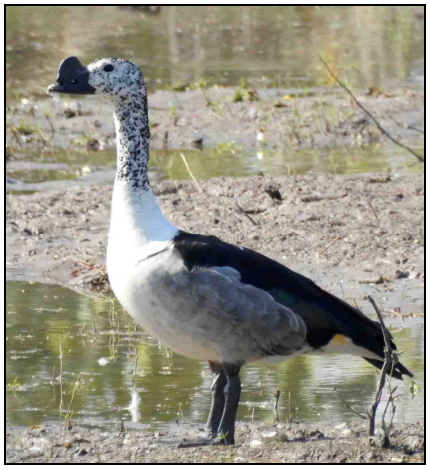
## Jamnagar – A Birding Wonder

Text & photos: Sita Susarla

**View from the Khijadia watch-tower**

Located on the coast of the Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat, Jamnagar houses a number of unspoilt islands, beaches and hills and is home to both sea birds and shore birds.

We visited the Khijadia Bird Sanctuary in the first week of December 2016 and were thrilled to see flocks of Flamingos, Pelicans, Cranes, Avocets, Eurasian Curlews (*Numenius arquata*), Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*), various Gulls and Terns, Knob-billed Ducks (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*), Northern Pintails (*Anas acuta*) and Northern Shovelers (*Anas clypeata*) to name a few.



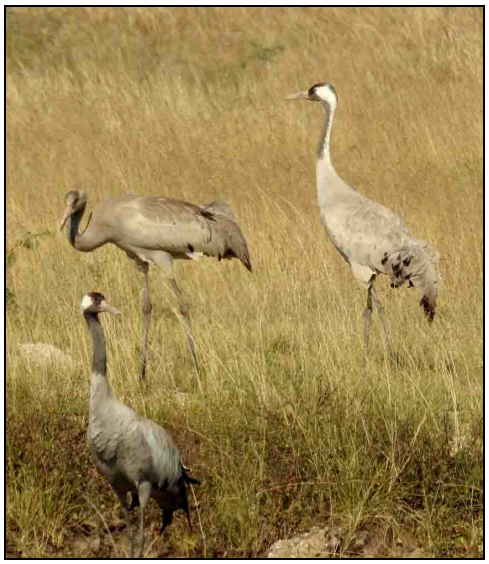
**Knob-billed Duck**

**Eurasian Curlew**

We camped at Hotel President, whose owner Mr. Mushtaq is an avid birdwatcher. His guidance was of great help in locating many endemic birds. Our birding itinerary included visits to Khijadia Bird Sanctuary, Saltpans of Sachana, INS ValsuraRoad, Dhinchda, Bedi Port and Rosy Port.

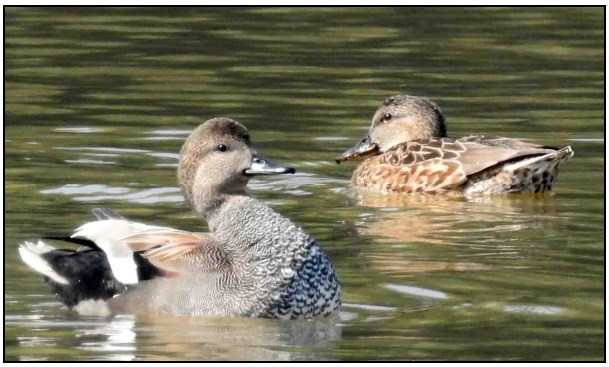
**Demoiselle Crane**

The Khijadia Bird sanctuary is spread over an area of 6.05 $km^2$ and provides an ideal habitat for sea and shore birds. There are 3 watch towers for birdwatchers, as well as inspection paths leading deep into the foliage. Our first sighting on the early winter morning was a flock of Demoiselle Cranes (*Grus virgo*) flying above us and, a little later, some Common Cranes (*Grus grus*) in the fields adjacent to the sanctuary. The guide told us that the cranes visit local cultivations early in the morning and feed on cereals and vegetables. Demoiselle Cranes often gather in large flocks and use cultivated areas in India and roost in the nearby wetlands.

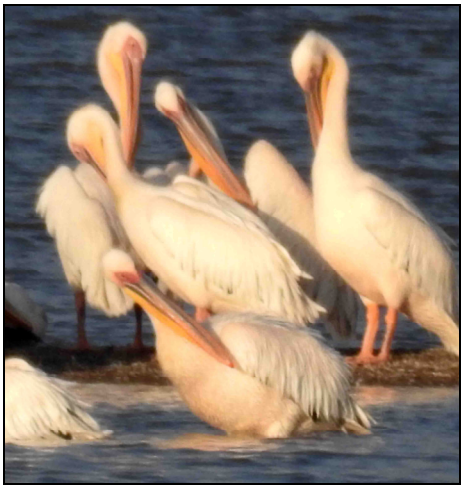


**Common Crane**

We stopped by at the freshwater tanks to see Ferruginous Ducks (*Aythya nyroca*), Common Pochards (*Aythya ferina*), Little Grebes (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), Gadwalls (*Anas strepera*), Cormorants, Coots, Shovelers and Pintails.

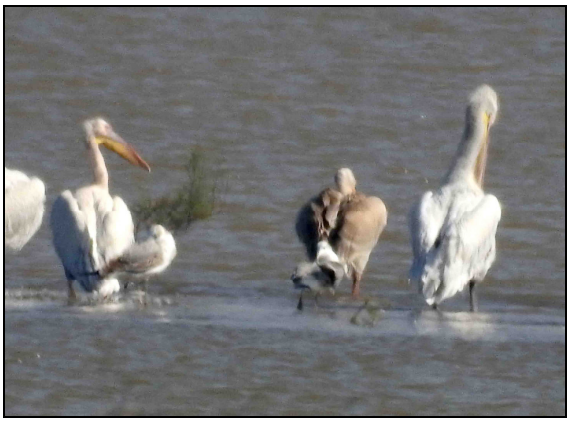


**Gadwall Male (L) and Female (R)**

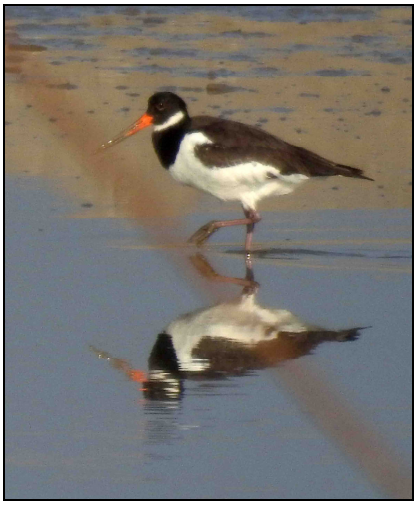


**Great White Pelican**

A little further in the sea water we spotted Eurasian Curlews in huge flocks and Great White Pelicans (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) almost everywhere. There were a few Dalmatian Pelicans (*Pelecanus crispus*) also.



**Dalmatian Pelican**



**Eurasian Oystercatcher**

Moving further on the guide showed us a few Eurasian Oystercatchers (*Haematopus ostralegus*) in non-breeding plumage and Great Thick-knees (*Esacus recurvirostris*).

**Great Thick-knee**

**Pied Avocet**

As we moved deeper into the sanctuary we had to hold our breath at the sight of Lesser Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus minor*) and Pied Avocets (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) in hundreds. Along with them there were also hundreds of Gull-billed Terns (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) and a few Heuglin's Gulls (*Larus heuglini*).

**White-tailed Lapwing**

**Desert Wheatear**

On Day 2 we went to the Phase-II of the sanctuary and were lucky to spot a White-tailed Lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*), a rare winter visitor to the sanctuary. The Desert Wheatear (*Oenanthe pleschanka*), a winter visitor to NW India, was very active as we could sight it at many places in the sanctuary. We, however, could not get to see the Great Crested Grebe despite our best efforts.

**Crab-plover**

On day 3 we set out in search of Crab-plovers (*Dromas ardeola*) and found them in the water creek between Sachana and Balachadi beaches. It was a great sight. The plovers tend to move closer to the land during high tide and away from land as the tide recedes. This bird resembles a plover, but has very long grey legs and a strong heavy black bill similar to a tern. It has black-and-white plumage, a long neck and an upright posture. Its bill is unique among waders, and specialised for eating crabs. Among the other birds we saw were Terek Sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*), Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*), Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) and Temminck's Stint (*Calidris temminckii*).

**Curlew Sandpiper**

**Terek Sandpiper**

We also drove along INS Valsura road and, amidst the saltpans, saw a large number of Slender-billed Gulls (*Chroicocephalus genei*), Little Stints and Temminck's Stints.

**Temminck's and Little Stints**

**Slender-billed Gull**

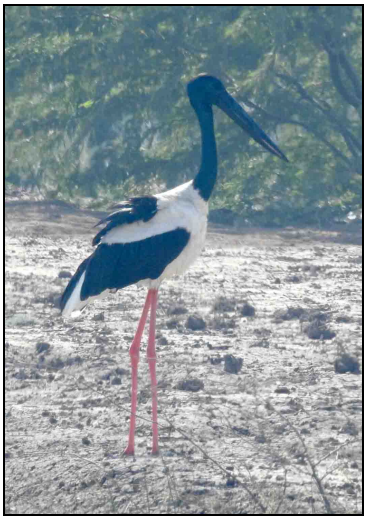
**Crested Lark**

We also went scouting for the Indian Skimmer in Bedi and Rosy Port areas but could not locate any. However, we sighted many Western Reef Egrets (*Egretta gularis*), Black-eared Kites (*Milvus migrans lineatus*) and Crested Larks (*Galerida cristata*).

We wound up our visit watching the spectacular display of murmurations of Rosy Starlings (*Pastor roseus*) at the Lakhota lake in Jamnagar city.

**Common Redshank**

**Western Reef Egret**



**Black-necked Stork**

The full list of birds sighted during the trip is given below:

| Sl. No: | Common Name | Scientific Name | Sl. No: | Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lesser Whistling-duck | Dendrocygna javanica | 26 | Common Moorhen | Gallinula chloropus |
| 2 | Greylag Goose | Anser anser | 27 | Common Coot | Fulica atra |
| 3 | Common Pochard | Aythya ferina | 28 | Demoiselle Crane | Grus virgo |
| 4 | Ferruginous Duck | Aythya nyroca | 29 | Common Crane | Grus grus |
| 5 | Northern Shoveler | Anas clypeata | 30 | Painted Stork | Mycteria leucocephala |
| 6 | Gadwall | Anas strepera | 31 | Asian Openbill | Anastomus oscitans |
| 7 | Eurasian Wigeon | Anas penelope | 32 | Black-necked Stork | Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus |
| 8 | Indian Spot-billed Duck | Anas poecilorhyncha | 33 | Great White Pelican | Pelecanus onocrotalus |
| 9 | Northern Pintail | Anas acuta | 34 | Dalmatian Pelican | Pelecanus crispus |
| 10 | Common Teal | Anas crecca | 35 | Black-crowned Night Heron | Nycticorax nycticorax |
| 11 | Knob-billed Duck | Sarkidiornis melanotos | 36 | Indian Pond Heron | Ardeola grayii |
| 12 | Indian Peafowl | Pavo cristatus | 37 | Cattle Egret | Bubulcus ibis |
| 13 | Grey Francolin | Francolinus pondicerianus | 38 | Grey Heron | Ardea cinerea |
| 14 | Greater Flamingo | Phoenicopterus roseus | 39 | Purple Heron | Ardea purpurea |
| 15 | Lesser Flamingo | Phoenicopterus minor | 40 | Great Egret | Ardea alba |
| 16 | Little Grebe | Tachybaptus ruficollis | 41 | Intermediate Egret | Ardea intermedia |
| 17 | Eurasian Collared Dove | Streptopelia decaocto | 42 | Little Egret | Egretta garzetta |
| 18 | Laughing Dove | Streptopelia senegalensis | 43 | Western Reef Egret | Egretta gularis |
| 19 | Yellow-footed Green Pigeon | Treron phoenicopterus | 44 | Black-headed Ibis | Threskiornis melanocephalus |
| 20 | Asian Palm Swift | Cypsiurus balasiensis | 45 | Eurasian Spoonbill | Platalea leucorodia |
| 21 | Little Swift | Apus affinis | 46 | Indian Black Ibis | Pseudibis papillosa |
| 22 | Jacobin Cuckoo | Clamator jacobinus | 47 | Glossy Ibis | Plegadis falcinellus |
| 23 | Asian Koel | Eudynamys scolopaceus | 48 | Little Cormorant | Microcarbo niger |
| 24 | White-breasted Waterhen | Amaurornis phoenicurus | 49 | Great Cormorant | Phalacrocorax carbo |
| 25 | Purple Swamphen | Porphyrio porphyrio | 50 | Indian Cormorant | Phalacrocorax fuscicollis |

| Sl. No: | Common Name | Scientific Name | Sl. No: | Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 101 | Rose-ringed Parakeet | Psittacula krameri | 124 | Plain Prinia | Prinia inornata |
| 102 | Small Minivet | Pericrocotus cinnamomeus | 125 | Common Tailorbird | Orthotomus sutorius |
| 103 | Indian Golden Oriole | Oriolus kundoo | 126 | Red-rumped Swallow | Cecropis daurica |
| 104 | Common Iora | Aegithina tiphia | 127 | Wire-tailed Swallow | Hirundo smithii |
| 105 | Black Drongo | Dicrurus macrocercus | 128 | Barn Swallow | Hirundo rustica |
| 106 | Ashy Drongo | Dicrurus leucophaeus | 129 | White-eared Bulbul | Pycnonotus leucotis |
| 107 | White-bellied Drongo | Dicrurus caerulescens | 130 | Red-vented Bulbul | Pycnonotus cafer |
| 108 | Bay-backed Shrike | Lanius vittatus | 131 | Oriental White-eye | Zosterops palpebrosus |
| 109 | Rufous Treepie | Dendrocitta vagabunda | 132 | Large Grey Babbler | Argya malcolmi |
| 110 | House Crow | Corvus splendens | 133 | Jungle Babbler | Turdoides striata |
| 111 | Indian Paradise-flycatcher | Terpsiphone paradisi | 134 | Common Babbler | Turdoides caudata |
| 112 | Purple-rumped Sunbird | Leptocoma zeylonica | 135 | Rosy Starling | Pastor roseus |
| 113 | Purple Sunbird | Cinnyris asiaticus | 136 | Asian Pied Starling | Gracupica contra |
| 114 | Baya Weaver | Ploceus philippinus | 137 | Brahminy Starling | Sturnia pagodarum |
| 115 | Indian Silverbill | Euodice malabarica | 138 | Common Myna | Acridotheres tristis |
| 116 | Scaly-breasted Munia | Lonchura punctulata | 139 | Indian Robin | Saxicoloides fulicatus |
| 117 | House Sparrow | Passer domesticus | 140 | Oriental Magpie Robin | Copsychus saularis |
| 118 | Citrine Wagtail | Motacilla citreola | 141 | Tickell's Blue Flycatcher | Cyornis tickelliae |
| 119 | White-browed Wagtail | Motacilla maderaspatensis | 142 | Red-breasted Flycatcher | Ficedula parva |
| 120 | Rufous-tailed Lark | Ammomanes phoenicura | 143 | Black Redstart | Phoenicurus ochruros |
| 121 | Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark | Eremopterix griseus | 144 | Pied Bushchat | Saxicola caprata |
| 122 | Crested Lark | Galerida cristata | 145 | Desert Wheatear | Oenanthe deserti |
| 123 | Ashy Prinia | Prinia socialis | | | |

* * *

## Trip Report: BSAP Field Trip to Hyderabad Golf Club, 23rd November 2016

Text: Shafaat Ulla; Photos: Dr G Samuel Sukumar

**The group**

We had a most thrilling birding trip to the Hyderabad Golf Club. We were invited by our life member Santaram, not only for birding, but also for breakfast. Santaram is a keen golfer and is based in USA but is a regular 'winter migrant' to Hyderabad. Since the club is busy with golfers on week-ends, we had to settle for a week day. We were altogether 17 members who attended, not bad for a working day.

**The golf course, with Golkonda Fort in the background**

The golf course is situated in and around the Golconda Fort and near Qutub Shahi Tombs. It occupies an area of approximately 80 acres, 20% outside the fort and the rest right inside the fort. It is a full-fledged 18-hole course as per international norms. The manicured lush green lawns are known as 'fairways' which average a length of about 300 to 400 meters each. Since it is an 18-hole course, there are eighteen such fairways. When a player completes all the holes, he would have walked about 8 kms. The peripheries of the fairways are lined by wild growth, grasses, thorny bushes, trees and various old structures and ruins of the fort. The golf course is a fascinating place and according to Santaram, one of the most unique golf courses in the world!

**Common Myna**

**Rose-ringed Parakeet**

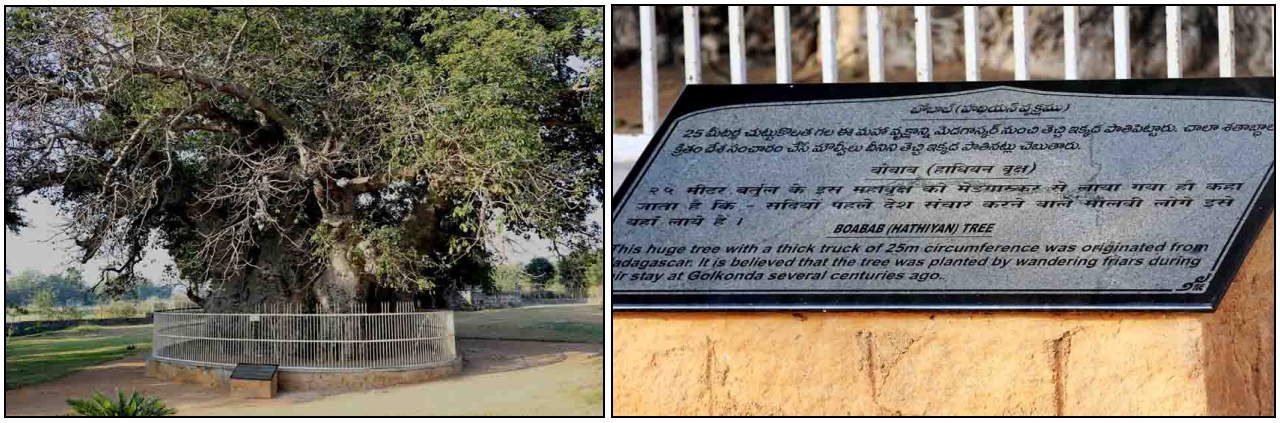
We all gathered at the club house at seven in the morning and started our walk from the first hole, walking along the side paths, avoiding the grass. The first to confront us was a noisy flock of Rose-ringed Parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*), nesting in the holes and crevices of a tall and old wall-like structure, and at the bushes at its base, a pair of Indian Robins (*Saxicoloides fulicatus*). This was followed by the sighting of the Common Mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*), monopolizing some other old structure. Further up we came to a small but beautiful lake, where a solitary Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*) was enjoying a swim.

We cut across to the left of the lake to approach a thick forested area. Here we spotted both the Purple (*Cinnyris asiaticus*) and the Purple-rumped Sunbirds (*Leptocoma zeylonica*), Plain Prinia (*Prinia inornata*) and Scaly-breasted Munias (*Lonchura punctulata*).

**Black Kite**

**Plum-headed Parakeet Male (L) and Female (R)**

Proceeding further, we entered the main fort through a tunnel under the impregnable ramparts. Inside the main fort, were lush green fairways, wedged in between old structures and ruins. Here we encountered Plum-headed Parakeets (*Psittacula cyanocephala*), Green Bee-eaters (*Merops orientalis*), Black Drongos (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) and plenty of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*). There is one more beautiful water body here, where Indian Pond Herons (*Ardeola grayii*), Little Egrets and a couple of Large Cormorants were busy finding their breakfast.


BOABAB (HATHIYAN) TREE
This huge tree with a thick truck of 25m circumference was originated from
adagascar. It is believed that the tree was planted by wandering friars during
ir stay at Golkonda several centuries ago.

**Hathiyaan Ka Jhaad**

One cannot miss to mention a tree which we passed by. It was the iconic "hathiyan ka jhaad" (elephantine tree), a baobab tree, approximately 400 years old, presented to one of the Qutub Shahi kings by a traveler from Madagascar. It is healthy and still flowering and its trunk is so huge that it can accommodate about 50 people in its hollow!

**Spotted Owlet**

After having taken a full round of the course within the fort, we came to the 16th hole where there is a small canteen, which serves as a rest area for the golfers. In its vicinity is a fairly good forested area where we spotted the Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyceros birostris*), Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*), Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*) and a White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*).

Soon, it was almost nine o'clock and time to head back. The management provided us with battery-operated golf carts which ferried us back to the club house, saving us considerable walking. We chalked up a list of about 50 species but the migrant Wagtails were conspicuous by their absence.

A sumptuous breakfast awaited us at the club house. We were seated at the verandah, overlooking the lush green lawns as far as the eye could see, with automatic water sprinklers creating mini rainbows. After having done full justice to the hot *puris* and *masala dosas* we took leave of Santaram, after thanking him profusely.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our Life Member and President of the Club, Mr Vikram Deo Rao, Gr Capt Raksha, GM, and Lt Col Reginald, Manager, for their hospitality.

Some other photographs from the trip:

**Common Hawk Cuckoo**

**Indian Silverbill**

**White-throated Kingfisher**

**Indian Grey Mongoose**

* * *

## Bird of the Month

Text: Umesh Mani; Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati

# Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)

**Bar-tailed Godwit** (Coringa, 04-12-2016)

Order: Charadriiformes
Family: Scolopacidae
Genus: *Limosa*
Species: *L. lapponica*
Size: 37-41cm

Description & distribution: The Bar-tailed Godwit, also known as Barred-rumped or Small Godwit, is a short-legged Godwit, and males are, on average, smaller than females (although there may be regional variations in size). The adult bird has blue-grey legs, while its head, neck, breast and belly are off-white in the non-breeding season and brick-red in breeding season. Upperparts are mottled grey. The sexes are alike, and the juvenile is similar to the non-breeding adult, but with a buff wash to the underparts, and buff edges to the mantle and scapulars. The bill is very long and slightly upturned, and is pink at the base and black towards the tip. An inverted 'V' on the rump and lack of white wing-bars (both seen more easily in flight), and a barred tail, help distinguish it from the other Godwit seen in India, the Black-tailed Godwit.

Three sub-species are recognised. *L. l. lapponica*, the smallest sub-species, breeds from northern Scandinavia east to the Taymyr Peninsula, and winters in the western coasts of Europe (British Isles, Netherlands), South Africa and the Persian Gulf. *L. l. menzbieri*, intermediate in size, breeds in north-eastern Asia, from the Taymyr Peninsula east to the Kolyma River delta, and winters in Australia and south-eastern Asia. *L. l. baueri*, the largest sub-species, breeds in the far north-eastern parts of Asia, east of the Kolyma River delta and in western Alaska, and winters in Australia and New Zealand.

Habitat & behaviour: The Bar-tailed Godwit is usually seen in small-to-large mixed flocks, along with Black-tailed Godwits, Dunlins and other waders. It is mainly a saltwater species, tending to keep to seashores, mudflats and edges of marshes, although it is occasionally seen in nearby grasslands also. It uses its long bill for foraging by probing the mud for marine invertebrates, crustaceans and insects, which constitute its main diet, and it may also locate insects by sight in short vegetation. Besides, it is also known to eat some parts of aquatic plants. Its call, usually heard in flight, is a sharp *a-wik, a-wik, a-wik*, while the alarm call is a two-syllabled *te-ten, te-ten* or *chitiu-chitiu-chitiu*.

Nesting: The Bar-tailed Godwit breeds only from its fourth year, mainly between April and August. Its nest is a shallow cup in the ground, lined with moss, fine grass, lichen or other soft vegetation. The usual clutch consists of 4 eggs which are beige with scattered brown patches. Incubation and care of the young are handled by both sexes.

Local name: The Bar-tailed Godwit is known as *'gudera', 'gairiya', 'fangral' or 'khag'* in Hindi and *'tondu ulanka'* in Telugu.

* * *

**For Private Circulation Only**
**Editors:** Shanti Mani, Umesh Mani **Email:** bsap.pitta@gmail.com

**For information, write to:** Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/bsap_online. **Website:** www.bsap.in. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (*Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)*